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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: RECALL OF PRESIDENT CHEN SHUI-BIAN

¶1. Summary: President Chen Shui-bian's survived the recall motion in the Legislative Yuan Tuesday and stayed in the Taiwan media spotlight June 28. Almost all papers front-paged the failure of the recall motion and Chen's apology to the public. The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, ran a banner headline on page two that read "Four-Point Statement: Bian Urges Ruling, Opposition Parties to Return to Rational Middle Path." The pro-unification "United Daily News," however, ran a banner headline on page three that said "Ma: Disgrace for Democracy, History Will Remember This Day." The same newspaper front-paged the results of its latest survey, which showed that the disapproval rating for the DPP rose to a new high of 68 percent, and the number of those who are displeased with President Chen's performance rose to 66 percent. The pro-status quo "China Times" also front-paged the results of its own poll: 42 percent of those polled said they are disappointed with the outcome of Tuesday's recall vote, and 56 percent said they believe it is no longer appropriate for Chen to remain in his position. The same poll also found that KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou's overall approval rating had dropped to a new low of 49 percent, while 34 percent of respondents are displeased with his recent performance.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, the "Liberty Times" "Free Talk" column urged President Chen and the DPP to seriously face the fact that their clean image has been damaged. Editorials in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" and "Taiwan News" both said that since Chen has paid a heavy price, the opposition parties should show restraint and discipline as they have made their point. A column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" said with a leader who has lost his prestige and a ruling party in which all its heroes strive for supremacy, Chen and the DPP are just about to face their challenges. A "China Times" editorial said even though the recall motion has failed, the public have already made their judgment - namely, over 50 percent of the people hope Chen would step down on his own accord. A "United Daily News" editorial said the Legislative Yuan's vote on the recall motion is not a political verdict for Chen, as the public and the judiciary will continue to uncover the truth behind the many scandals. An editorial in the limited-circulation, conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" echoed that even though Chen has survived the recall, he still faces a lot of problems. End summary.

A) "After the Show Is Over!"

The "Free Talk" column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 600,000] noted (6/28):

"... In the wake of the failure to pass the recall motion, both President Chen and the DPP must solemnly and seriously face the fact that their clean image has been smashed. They need to take action

to prove their incorruptibility and competence. There will be no more opportunities for them. Both Ma Ying-jeou and the KMT must also reflect upon themselves and the legitimacy of their claim to pursue cleanliness and justice on the one hand, and sheltering corruption by selling ill-gotten party assets on the other. ..."

B) "Toppling the Cabinet Is Not an Option"

The pro-independence "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (6/28):

"Taiwan's unprecedented presidential recall vote yesterday failed to achieve the majority required to pass. Although the motion came to naught, it should serve as a lesson and reminder for President Chen Shui-bian of the need to improve his administration in the last two years of his presidency. ... The recall bid has highlighted that Chen's performance has not been up to par. He has paid a heavy price, and the opposition should now show restraint and discipline as it has made its point. It is time to call for an end to hostilities if Taiwan is to escape from this political quagmire. Ma's decision not to entertain further discussions on toppling the Cabinet is a step in the right direction. It is more important, however, that he holds true to his promises rather than dancing to the tune of the hawkish faction within his party or the waning PFP."

C) "Taiwanese People Should Come First"

The pro-independence English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] noted in an editorial (6/28):

"... We sincerely hope that the pan-KMT camp and its leaders will cease this futile and undemocratic campaign, accept the result of the March 2004 presidential election and adopt a proactive attitude to allow the passage of major bills, construction, and economic budgets of benefit to all Taiwanese people, regardless of political affiliation. ... While attempting to kick-start discussions with opposition leaders is important, the highest priority for Chen and other DPP leaders now is to initiate a frank and thorough dialogue with Taiwan's 23 million people. Then confidence and trust can be rebuilt through action as well as words."

D) "A Big Fish That Has Been Washed to the Beach"

Columnist Antonio Chiang noted in his column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 500,000] (6/28):

"... The DPP passed a critical test this time with A-bian on its back, and as a result, the supervisor-subordinate relationship between A-bian and the DPP has changed from its essence. With a leader who has lost his prestige and a ruling party in which all the heroes are striving for supremacy, these people are just about to face their challenges. A-bian used to swim leisurely in the big sea of Taiwan's mainstream public opinion. But now he is like a big fish washed by giant waves to the beach, taking his last gasp. There is no way he can return to the ocean again."

E) "Even Though Recall Motion Fails to Pass, Public Opinion Has Made Its Judgment"

The pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (6/28):

"... That's right, President Chen has again resolved another crisis in his term of office, but he has paid a high price for his bitter victory! Chen passed this critical test not because the reasons for his recall have disappeared, but because the threshold stipulated by the Constitution to recall the president is really too high, plus the fact that the DPP has done the best it can to support him. But the undeniable fact is that Chen is, after all, the first president in ROC constitutional history against whom a recall motion was launched, and this recall motion gained majority support from the legislators. No single pan-Blue legislator voted against the motion; seven independent legislators voted for the motion; and the Taiwan Solidarity Union legislators, who also belong to the pan-Green camp, did not vote against the motion. The symbolic significance of such an outcome is self-evident. Even though Chen

has dodged a popular vote, there is no way he can dodge the message clearly sent to him via all the opinion polls: Over 50 percent of the public hope Chen would step down on his own accord; over 50 percent of the people did not accept the contents of his 'report to the people;' and over 50 percent of the public chose to trust [tycoon fugitive] Chen Yu-hao, rather than him. ... Just look at these figures. In fact, it is no longer important whether there will be a popular vote or not. The public have made their judgment, haven't they? ..."

F) "Legislative Yuan Casts Zero Ballot Against Recall Motion; Society Will Continue to Uncover Truth"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] wrote in an editorial (6/28):

"... The recall motion has come to an end in the Legislative Yuan, but the public opinion in Taiwan's society which believes that Chen is no longer qualified to be a state leader is mounting ever more. The result of 'zero vote against the recall motion,' an outcome of the DPP's tactical manipulation, even fully demonstrated that the Legislative Yuan's recall motion is by no means a political verdict for Chen. Now the scandals are still escalating, and the truth remains to be uncovered. After having got rid of the political noises created by the recall motion, the judiciary's and social public's probe into the scandals will surely return to the center of the stage. ... "

G) "Chen Survives Recall, Still Face Problems"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] noted in an editorial (6/28):

"... The DPP, which holds 87 seats, boycotted the vote by not attending the legislative session and refusing to cast ballots. This strategy effectively obstructed the recall motion from being approved. But the DPP will pay a political price. It will be remembered by the voters for choosing to sacrifice moral principles when it came to the need for defending the presidency and guarding its ruling power. ..."

KEEGAN